

HOW TO HIRE AN ARCHITECT



Executive Director Robert Leath and EHC Treasurer Tom Credle meeting with Edenton Town Manager Corey Gooden, Project Architect Laurie Jackson, and Construction Manager Don Faircloth to review the progress of the structural stabilization at Kadesh AME Zion Edenton, NC. Photo by Alexis Tobias-Jacavone.

Grantees enter into the National Fund for Sacred Places (National Fund) program at different phases of a capital construction project. Grantees range from just beginning the planning process to being ready to start construction, and everything in between.

If you have not hired your architect, it can be challenging to know where to start. Your working relationship with an architect can last months and sometimes years, so it is good to find an architect who is dependable, honest, communicative, works to meet your goals, and understands your historic sacred place.

How do you start the process of finding an architect? There are a variety of methods you can use. Each method has different steps to take, and they each have pros and cons. The three methods below are the most common approaches, and hopefully, one of these processes will help you find the right architect to help you through your project.

1. Continue an Established Relationship
2. Research and Interview
3. Send out a Request for Proposal (RFP)/Request for Qualification (RFQ)

As part of the Capital Grant Submission, National Fund staff will review and approve your architect and other consultants, but we are happy to review potential architect's credentials and/or previous experience and provide feedback as you are considering your options.

1. CONTINUE AN ESTABLISHED RELATIONSHIP

Have you worked with an architect previously? Did you have a good working relationship? Was the project successful? If the answers to these questions are all yes, you can work with your previous architect again. While the National Fund does not require a competitive process for hiring an architect, we do encourage you to obtain three (3) competitive bids/quotes for services that exceed \$50,000 as a best practice. We understand that this is not always possible.

Working with an architect who has previously worked on your building or one you have previously worked with can give you a head start. You already know the architect's working style and how best to communicate with them, which can streamline the project. The architect also knows your building and previously completed projects, which can reduce the time needed to investigate the building. If you had a positive working relationship with the architect and were pleased with the outcome of your previous project, you can reach out to the same architect again.

If you want to work with someone different, you can take one of the following approaches to finding your architect.

2. RESEARCH AND INTERVIEW

If you do not have an architect you would like to work with or would like to explore new architects in your geographic area, researching and interviewing potential architects is an informal method to hire an architect. With this method, you will explore architecture firms in your geographic area that have experience working on historic buildings. You can learn this from a firm's website by reviewing the services they provide, their previous experience, their mission or design philosophy, and awards.

In addition to researching architecture firms, you can get recommendations by reaching out to the following groups and organizations. If you need help identifying the organizations you should contact, reach out to your National Fund Point Person.

- Congregations with historic sacred places in your geographic area or within your denomination that have recently gone through a capital construction project
- Your local historic preservation non-profit, if applicable
- Your statewide historic preservation non-profit
- Your city's historic preservation office or commission
- Your State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) or Tribal Historic Preservation Office (THPO)
- Your local American Institute of Architects chapter
- National Organization of Minority Architects (NOMA)
- Association for Preservation Technology (APT)

After researching and receiving recommendations, you can contact a select group of firms and invite them to participate in an interview. Before the interview, ask the architectural firm to provide information about

recent relevant example projects, CVs for the individuals who would work on your project, and client testimonials. See example interview questions below.

PROS AND CONS

This method requires a larger upfront investment of your time. It is dependent on you researching the individual architecture firms, contacting them to see if they are interested, describing your potential project, and explaining your goals.

This method can be quicker than a formal Request for Proposal (RFP)/Request for Qualifications (RFQ), and it will allow you to eliminate architecture firms that you do not feel would be a good match for your project.

3. SEND OUT A REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL (RFP)/REQUEST FOR QUALIFICATION (RFQ)

Sending out an RFP or RFQ is a common method for hiring an architect. An RFP is a document that you distribute to announce you have a project at your historic sacred place, and invite qualified architects to submit a proposal. It typically describes your congregation, outlines your project scope of work, provides a potential timeline, provides a submission deadline, asks specific questions to better understand the architecture firm, asks for a fee proposal, outlines the evaluation criteria, and provides submission guidelines. An RFQ asks for similar information to an RFP but does not require a fee proposal.

You can distribute the RFP or RFQ directly to individual architecture firms or through your local American Institute of Architects (AIA) chapter.

Architects respond to RFPs or RFQs with information about relevant example projects, a description of their process, answers to the questions in the RFP or RFQ, CVs of the individuals who will work on your project, client testimonials, and a proposed fee (for an RFP only). If your project requires additional members on the design team (engineers or consultants), an architecture firm will respond to an RFP or RFQ with an entire design team. So, they will provide the qualifications and fee proposal for the entire design team.

After reviewing the submitted information, you can invite potential architecture firms for an interview. See example interview questions below.

PROS AND CONS

Sending out an RFP or RFQ is a great way to learn more about different architecture firms, their approach, and how they can contribute to your project. You also have the potential to receive proposals from a wider range of architecture firms and/or from firms you may not have been aware of.

However, the process may be too time-consuming for your schedule. Issuing the RFP or RFQ, allowing time for the architects to respond, reviewing submissions, and interviewing firms can add several months to your project.

The fees in the RFP may not be entirely accurate. Depending on how well you define your project's scope of work or if scope is added or changed, the architect may ask for additional fees.

AFTER YOU FIND THE ARCHITECT YOU WOULD LIKE TO WORK WITH

You do not have to accept the architect's initial fee proposal. You may be able to negotiate the fee, terms, payment schedule, and timeline, but be careful not to push too hard. You should work together with your architect to develop terms and a contract that works for both entities.

Once you have identified the architect you want to hire, you are ready to review and sign a formal contract with the architect. It is important to document everything in writing, so all parties know the project expectations and their responsibilities. This will include detailed information such as fees, timelines, and services. A good contract should protect both the congregation and the architect.

The contract is a legally binding document, so it may be helpful to have a lawyer review the contract before signing.

Congregations sometimes choose to hire businesses or individuals who are also members of their church. We would recommend that congregations follow any relevant conflict of interest policies in this situation, or consider enacting a conflict of interest policy if one does not exist.

No matter what method you choose to hire an architect, remember to take your time, find a professional who understands historic sacred places, carefully evaluate your options, and select someone who will act as your trusted partner and advocate for your goals.

EXAMPLE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

- What is your firm's design philosophy?
- What kind of services do you offer? Are you licensed to provide those services in my state?
- Can you describe your design process for this project?
- How would you describe your design approach?
- Would you describe the steps involved in the architectural process?
- What is your experience with solving our particular problems?
- What is your experience with historic preservation?
- What is your experience with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation?
- What is your experience working with sacred places of worship?
- What are the challenges you see in our project?
- How will you bring value to the project?
- How will this project help us succeed?
- How much of your business is repeat clients?
- What is your process for receiving feedback?
- How will you engage my team?

- What is included in your fee?
 - What is your hourly rate?
 - How frequently do you bill, and what are the conditions of payment for work to continue on our project?
 - Does your firm carry liability insurance?
 - Will there be any engineering consultants involved in our project? Are their fees included in your fee?
 - Is there any cost estimating included while you are designing our project?
 - Can you help us select a contractor?
 - What services will you provide during construction for our project?
- 